



# A BAJAN TOUR GIRL EXPLORING BARBADOS

I AM A BAJAN GIRL THAT IS ME. A LITTLE BIT OF THIS A LITTLE BIT OF THAT. LIVING ON THE ROCK MY ISLAND NATION BARBADOS. MEETING FABULOUS PEOPLE AND SHARING MY ISLAND WITH THEM IS WHAT I DO AND LOVE.

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SATURDAY, MAY 15, 2010

## White Slavery and Servitude in Barbados



Between the years of 1652 to 1659 it is estimated that well over 50,000 men, women, and children of Irish descent were forcibly transported to British imperial colonies in Barbados and Virginia to serve as slave labor on plantations.

Other prisoners of war, as well as political dissenters, taken from conquered regions of England, Wales, and Scotland were also sent into permanent exile as slaves to Barbados. This essentially enabled Cromwell to purge the subject population of any perceived opposing elements, as well as to provide a lucrative source of profit through their sale to plantation owners. The extent to which White prisoners were transported to Barbados was so great, that by 1701, out of the roughly 25,000 slaves present on the island's plantations, about 21,700 of them were of European descent. Later, as the African slave trade began to expand and flourish, the Irish slave population of Barbados began to drastically recede over time, due in part to the fact that many were worked to death early on in their arrival and also as a result of racial intermixing with Black slaves.

In stark contrast to the small number of White indentured servants present on Barbados, who could at least theoretically look forward to eventual freedom no matter how bad their temporary bondage may have been, White slaves possessed no such hope. Indeed, they were treated the same as slaves of African descent in every manner imaginable. Irish slaves in Barbados were regarded as property to be bought, sold, treated

### ABOUT ME



#### GLORY TOURS BARBADOS

I am a Bajan girl and owner of Glory Tours. A tour company in Barbados. Living on the rock my island Nation Barbados. Meeting fabulous people and sharing my Island with them is what I do and love. I am descendant of Irish indentured servants, English merchants and a bit of Scottish thrown in there too. My great Grandfather was the first photographer of the Island. He drove and photographed the Royal family when they were in Barbados. He also collected stamps, coins and shells from all over the world. My Great Great Grandfather was John D Taylor. The inventor of the John D Taylors Velvet Falernum Liqueur, the #1 falernum in the world. He also wrote a few rum recipes that are still used today. What can I say the roots of this Island girl go deep. Within the family line there are Reverends, Merchants, Jewelers,

and mistreated in any way the slave-owner saw fit. Their children were born into hereditary slavery for life as well. Punitive violence, such as whippings, was liberally employed against Irish slaves, and was often used on them immediately upon their arrival in the colonies to brutally reinforce their enchainment status, and as a warning against future disobedience. The dehumanizing and degrading cattle-like physical inspections used to assess and showcase the "qualities" of each captive for prospective buyers, which reached infamy with the Black slave markets, was also practiced upon both White slaves and indentured servants in the colonies of the West Indies and North America. Irish slaves were marked off from their free White kinsmen through a branding of the owner's initials applied to the forearm for women and on the buttocks for men by a red-hot iron. Irish women, in particular were seen as a desirable commodity by White slave owners who purchased them as sexual concubines. Others found themselves sold off to local brothels. This degrading practice of sex slavery made Irish men, women and children potential victims to perverse whims of many unsavory buyers.

In reality, White slaves fared no better a fate as unwilling human property than did contemporary captive Africans. At times they were even treated worse than their Black counterparts due to economic considerations. This was especially true throughout most of the 17th century, as White captives were far more inexpensive on the slave market than their African counterparts, and hence were mistreated to a greater extent as they were seen as a conveniently disposable labor force. It was not until later that Black slaves became a cheaper commodity. An account dating back to 1667 grimly described the Irish of Barbados as "poor men, that are just permitted to live,... derided by the Negroes, and branded with the Epithite of white slaves." A 1695 account written by the island's governor frankly stated that they labored "in the parching sun without shirt, shoe, or stocking", and were "domineered over and used like dogs." It was common knowledge among the Irish of this era that to be deported, or "barbadosed", to the West Indies meant a life of slavery. In many cases, it was actually common for White slaves in Barbados to be supervised by mulatto or Black overseers, who often treated captive Irish laborers with exceptional cruelty. Indeed:

The mulatto drivers enjoyed using the whip on whites. It gave them a sense of power and was also a protest against their white sires. White women in particular were singled out for punishment in the fields. Sometimes, to satisfy a perverted craving, the mulatto drivers forced the women to strip naked before commencing the flogging and then forced them to continue working all day under the blistering sun. While the women were weeding in the fields in that condition, the drivers often satisfied their lust by taking them from the rear.

Such instances of horrific rape and unwilling sexual union between Irish female slaves and Black slave-drivers, was actually implicitly encouraged by many of their White masters. Mulatto children, who resulted from such unions, both willing and unwilling, were seen by the plantation masters as a potentially unlimited breeding stock of future native-born slave labor, acquired free of charge and without the costs of transportation. Existing public records on Barbados reveal that some planters went as far as to systematize this process of miscegenation through the establishment of special "stud farms" for the specific purpose of breeding mixed-race slave children. White female slaves, often as young as 12, were used as "breeders" to be forcibly mated with Black men.

Horticulturist, Photographers and yes even a Pirate

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The enslaved Irish of Barbados played a pivotal role as the instigators and leaders of various slave revolts on the island, which was an ever-present threat faced by the planter aristocracy. Such an uprising occurred in November 1655, when a group of Irish slaves and servants escaped along with several Blacks, and proceeded to attempt to spark a general rebellion among the enslaved community against their masters. This was a serious enough threat to justify the deployment of militia, which eventually overcame them in a pitched battle. Before their demise they had wreaked considerable havoc upon the ruling planter class, having hacked several to pieces in brutal retribution for their bondage. They had not succeeded in their broader strategy of completely laying waste by fire, the sugar fields in which they had been forced to labor for the enrichment of their masters. Those taken prisoner were made examples of, as a grim warning to the rest of their kindred Irish, when they were burned alive and their heads were thereafter displayed on pikes throughout the market place.

As a result of a steep increase in Black slave labor migration to Barbados, compounded with high rates of Irish mortality and racial intermixing, White slaves, which had once constituted the majority of the population in 1629, were reduced to an increasingly dwindling minority by 1786. In the present era, there remains only a minuscule, yet significant community within the native Barbadian population comprised of the descendants of Scots-Irish slaves, who continue to bear testimony to the tragic legacy of their enslaved Celtic forebears. This small minority within the predominantly Black island of Barbados is known locally as the "Red Legs", which was originally a derogatory name, understood in similar context to the slur "redneck", and was derived from the sun-burnt skin experienced by early White slaves who had been previously unadjusted to the tropical Caribbean climate. To this day, a community numbering approximately 400 still resides in the northeastern part of the island in the parish of St. John, and has vigorously resisted racially mixing with the larger Black population, despite living in abject poverty. Most make their living from subsistence farming and fishing, and indeed they are one of the most impoverished groups living in modern Barbados.

An interesting film on the Red legs can be watched  
<http://www.moondance.tv/broadcast-barbados.htm>

#### Books on this subject

Sean O'Callaghan, *To Hell or Barbados: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ireland*

Kelly D. Whittaker, *White Slavery, What the Scots Already Know*

Michael A. Hoffman II, *They Were White and They Were Slaves: The Untold History of the Enslavement of Whites in Early America*

Robert E. West, *England's Irish Slaves*

POSTED BY GLORY TOURS BARBADOS AT 4:50 PM

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